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SUMMER JOYS

EDWARD DUFNER

## THE EXHIBITION OF THE NEW YORK WATER COLOR CLUB

BY ELISABETH LUTHER CARY

TO the uninitiated public a water color is a water color, an oil color an oil, and there is the end of the matter. Naturally only those who handle the brush or have had explained to them the different techniques have much idea of what is meant by such things as underneath painting, glazes, scrubbing, staining, scumbling, varnishing, and so forth. And even when the variations in oil painting that appear in the comparison of a canvas heavily loaded with pigment with one across which a thin stain of color has lightly been brushed are too obvious to require explanation, the case of water

color is still considered simple and few people ask by what method the result has been accomplished. Nevertheless, water color painting as it is practiced today is an affair of many methods, hardly narrower in their range than those practiced by the painter in oil. There are body-color, a kind of painting in which the colors are mixed with white and thus rendered opaque; transparent water-color, in which the transparent colors are laid thinly on the surface of the paper which more or less influences their quality and in which the white ground is left exposed for the high lights; the "scrub" method in which

the pigment is rubbed into the paper producing a tender and atmospheric tone, and a dozen other methods each with its special advocates.

The efforts of modern artists to lift this particular medium to a higher level of popularity and importance than it lately has occupied, by forming societies devoted to it and holding exhibitions of the work of the members, are having their effect and cannot too highly be appreciated. The twentieth exhibition of the New York Water Color Club demonstrates not only the great variety of which water-color and pastel are capable, but the fact that a high degree of esthetic pleasure can be gained from the simpler technical practices.

In the picture that takes the Beal prize—a figure painting by Hilda Belcher, entitled "Young Girl in White"—we have an extremely respectful handling of the medium, one that asks from it nothing more than the effects most natural to it to give, and one that strains toward no characteristic other than those appropriate to it; yet the result is as delicately successful a bit of art as one is likely to see in any exhibition of contemporary work. The little figure is admirably drawn and the values are closely observed and sensitively recorded. The color is cool, restrained, and gently vigorous.

At almost the opposite pole is the handling of the pigment by Alexander Robinson, who does not hesitate to work with an impasto as heavy as he uses in oil color, the opaque body color often lying in lumps on the surface of the paper. In "The Moor's Café," for example, the effect is that of an oil-painting released from the oily quality which both Blake and Rossetti found so disagreeable a result of the oil medium.

A group of Spanish studies, by F. Luis Mora, are brilliant examples of the intelligent use of a thin covering pigment. His figures and street scenes are characterized by a sober richness of effect and by a vivacity in the lights not to be obtained except by a thorough mastery of the most difficult of technical processes, one that has been called by an accomplished technician "of all processes the least fitted for a beginner," although amateurs rush in

where experts fear to tread. Neither an amateur nor a beginner, Mr. Mora has used his medium both sympathetically and cleverly, noting with it differences of texture, light and atmosphere with a light precision as uncommon as it is refreshing.

A number of the water colors appear to be on linen, an expedient that is not new as Whistler used it long ago, but that has been gaining in favor of late years. It has at least two merits, one, the interesting variety of surface obtained, which is not unlike that of some of the charming Japanese papers, the other, the flexibility of ground which prevents the flecking or peeling that sometimes takes place when body color is used on too smooth a surface.

Linen, also, is in high favor as a ground for pastel, and the present exhibition demonstrates the steady growth of interest in this beautiful mode of expression. The list of serious works executed in pastel in even this limited exhibition is a long one and it must suffice to mention a few of the more representative examples. Elmer Livingston MacRae exhibits two portraits of place, one of the East River, the other the "City in Winter," in each of which a wise economy of means has been practiced and ample use made of the ground color.

Hanna Rion has a "Portrait of a Farmer Artist," in which, apparently, a thin water color stain has been used within a black chalk outline, with excellent results. Anna M. Peck's "Janey" is a pastel in which the ground is entirely covered and the surface has the soft, chalky quality which has been considered a characteristic quality of pastel and has done something to put it out of favor with a generation of artists who like crisper methods and more resisting materials. Miss Peck, however, has used the slightly "old-fashioned" method with so much tact and discretion, and draws with such energy, that her picture is a miracle of charm, combining piquancy with sweetness in execution as well as in subject.

A portrait by Sara M. Sears also shows the chalk covering the ground completely, but with a richly varied interplay of color without mechanical blending. In a large pastel portrait by Grace H. Turnbull the medium is treated very seriously, indeed,



YOUNG GIRL IN WHITE

HILDA BELCHER

with low tones and on a large scale. Lee Lufkin Kaula uses it smoothly for a portrait study in a high key, which she calls "Grandmother's Wedding Bonnet," and which presents a bewitching child, thoroughly well drawn, but with little sharpness of definition.

These are only a small proportion, chosen almost at random, from the pastels which show by the character of their execution that a long-neglected medium of great beauty is coming into its own again.

Among the notable water colors are Edward Dufner's poetic and spirited landscapes with figures; Tony Bell's handsome little girl in a plaid dress, full of

color and vitality; "Night," by Jerome Myers, a strong study of a familiar city scene; "Wash Day" and a "Portrait," by Rhoda Holmes Nichols; Alethea H. Platt's "The Lowestoft Jar," and Mary Van der Veer's "Petunias." From even this very inadequate sketch of the exhibition it will be seen that it has the spice of variety.

"Nature does not cast pearls before swine. There is just as much beauty visible to us in the landscape as we are prepared to appreciate—not a grain more."  
—*Thoreau.*